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ABSTRACT

The United States has made striking technical advances in recent years, but there has not been comparable progress in social services. Greater affluence and leisure for some have been one result of technical progress, but problems of poverty and urban development are more pressing. New developments to improve the condition of society can be expected. In view of this, there will be a growing need for personnel in the field of parks and recreation. Such personnel will to a large extent be drawn from junior college graduates. The Associates' 2-year training will not be sufficient for supervisory positions. It is suggested that junior colleges use the curriculum guide prepared by the National Recreation and Park Association. The Association has a personnel placement service that can provide junior colleges with qualified instructors in the field and refer graduates to positions. The Association will make every effort to provide the graduates with a stimulating career, continued training, and advancement opportunities. (MS)

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REGIONAL JUNIOR COLLEGE RECREATION EDUCATION INSTITUTE

at

American River College

September 25, 1969

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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The structure of our American society today presents a classic example of paradox. We are living in a unique era in the history of mankind when the most ingenious hardware ever contrived by the mind of man is penetrating our universe to distant planets and to the depths of the seas; when man is being prepared to live successfully in the hostile environment of the moon, to acclimate himself to the floor of the oceans, but yet is unable to adjust to living peacefully with his fellow man on this earth, or even in the very neighborhoods of the cities to which he is indigenous.

In the face of the greatest affluence ever experienced by the citizens of any nation on this earth, it is noteable that one of the prime issues confounding our government is the one of hunger.

JC 690 389

While advances in the field of technology have been rushing forward pell-mell, carrying with them a powerful upsurge in our economy and materially affecting and restructuring our way of life, little progress has been made in the solution of the human elements of our society, leaving a backwash of social problems which well may deluge us.

In the face of great technical achievements we are experiencing a complete disintegration of our social system. The pegs which have held our society

together in the past with any semblance of order or stability are being pulled out one by one till we are reduced to a level of jungle life without even the taboos of a tribal civilization.

List in your mind, if you will, for it should come easy to you, the formidable range of technical advances achieved by this nation in recent years. Such a listing is endless. Now, conjure up if you can, a few simple advances in the realm of social or human services which have occurred in this same period. Here the picture is different. In this realm we have witnessed not advance, but ignoble regression. What we find is war, with the slaying of human by human; frighteningly increased crime rates with man plundering man like predatory animals, riot and violence in the neighborhoods of our cities; rebellion and strife on our streets and college campuses.

The spread between technological achievement and the progress of society in benefitting from these achievements, which the sociologists of the 1930's were describing as a culture lag, has in the 1960's become not a lag, but a drag, which no people, no matter how powerful or affluent can any longer endure. Therefore, the time cannot be far off when our social structure and its institutions will have to be placed on a much higher priority of our national goals so that social programs and services can be brought much closer to the achievements of technology. We may have seen the first stirrings of this in the President's welfare and revenue sharing proposals of recent weeks.

In the midst of all of this, and a very disorganized and confounding part of it, yet one which cannot be separ ated from it, is evolving the greatest leisure in the history of the world.

Now I do not believe it is necessary for me to denote in great detail for a group such as this the changes in our society which are stimulating this evolution. These are elements of our technology and working conditions with

which most of us today are very much aware. However, what we are conscious of at this moment--the great expanse of leisure which has been established during the past several decades--is in actuality not the end of the evolutionary process, but if responsible projections are correct, it is but prologue to a leisure explosion which taxes the comprehension of even us, who have some direct knowledge of the forces at play in our society today.

Coupled with the evolving leisure of the masses of our population is a sharp growth in affluence and living standard which for the first time in history brings the enjoyment of leisure within the reach of a substantial portion of our population.

The paradox of affluence and leisure in juxtaposition to poverty and social disintegration establishes a murky backdrop for the picture I am painting. But it is out of this background that we will see emerge a demand of major significance for personnel trained to serve the Park and Recreation needs of America, creating a major field of employment in highly diversified areas of specialization. The personnel needs of this field within the next ten years will pall into significance any shortages we believe we have been experiencing up to this time.

Let me paint in some of the details of this picture with a few very broad strokes merely as an indication of several of the specific elements which will create the broad based market for personnel I foresee.

First of all the normal growth which can be expected in our present community programs and services will generate demand for many more personnel in the field. This, together with expansion through new county, district, and local municipal agencies will open up substantial numbers of positions which do not exist today.

Second, the mounting pressures on the federal establishment to close the chasm between the status of society and technology, the political effects of

backlash reflected in recent mayorality elections, are elements which create momentum toward massive restructuring of our cities so that as a Time magazine essay recently pointed out, "the cities must soon combine help for the black ghettos with more aid for blue collar neighborhoods."

Therefore, out of the rubble and slums creating the sub-human environment of millions of our citizens, the end product of generations of physical deterioration and human erosion; and out of the clapboard jungles of the suburbs which have sprung up on the periphery of cities, without plan or substance which already are rotting into the new blue collar slums of the lower middle class, are destined to come new cities, hopefully designed to preserve the potential for the good life to which the individual can aspire in an automated world holding the promise of a Utopian leisure.

New status for park planners and designers who will have a top level role in these developments, and a major increase in the number of recreators with sociologically oriented professional preparation who will be needed, open wide new vistas of personnel requirements which, until now, have been apparent only to the philosophical dreamers.

Third, our national affluence is spawning new types of institutions which already are beginning to make themselves felt in the personnel market now, and as they proliferate, their drain on the supply may well be formidable. These include the private recreation clubs providing for their membership year round recreation services of every type, a focal point of leisure resources for those who can afford them; the planned cities, privately developed, with primary orientation toward leisure living; private housing developments, designed to provide a total leisure environment for their tenants; specialized community living developments

for older citizens, and even unique projects providing recreationally based housing communities for single men and women. Management personnel at a variety of levels, whose professional preparation has been in the field of recreation are right now being referred for employment in these new markets through our placement service. Their impact on our field is no longer in the realm of the forecaster, it is already upon us.

Fourth, in commercial recreation we are finding the establishment of major facilities, not only the old bowling alleys, golf courses, and amusement parks, but now the great resort complexed, for skiing, boating, and related interests; commercial parks to serve the travel industry and its mobile vacation trailers and campers which are putting all America on holiday wheels; to list a few of the directions in which our future recreators will be headed.

Fifth, the federal and state governments, as well as the large lumber and paper industries and the power corporations, control vast acreages of forest lands and open spaces whose management for the benefit of the people of America will call on the highest skills and experiences of trained personnel. Here is another evolving market for those who will have to come out of the Jr. Colleges, Colleges and Universities training for our field.

This is but an introduction to the issue. I could go on regaling you with a myriad of other forecasts detailing new and increasing pressures for supplying the personnel needs of a field which will be in the foreseeable future, one of the major employers of trained personnel in America. In a sense, this is a bright picture indeed, to those of us who have devoted our lives to establishing the value and importance of recreation and parks in America. However, at the same time, it saddles us with a very serious responsibility. The 3,430 individuals who our recent recent manpower supply and demand study projected as the number which

would be graduated from both graduate and undergraduate curriculums in Park and Recreation in 1970, or even the 9,659 in this category projected for 1976, will be far and away short of the need even if all of them came directly into the field, which is not a strong probability. Yet the jobs will be there, ans since nature abhors a vacuum, these jobs will be filled, but unfortunately, not by persons qualified by training or experience for the responsibilities. This poses a very serious hazard to the entire field, since if the leisure needs of America are to be well served, and if the potential for the development of a sound and viable profession in the field of recreation and parks is to be firmly established, then the most important element in achieving these goals is a solid force of qualified personnel.

But in face of an unquestionable shortage of personnel how can our goals be met? Now this is precisely why you and I have gathered here tonight at American River College. We are here to explore one of the obvious answers to this question because it is already apparent that the junior college graduate with training in Recreation and Parks is emerging as the salvation of a field with a tremendous personnel shortage in the offing. And to bring this down to the very practical element of concern very frequently expressed by the junior college administrator--namely what are the prospects for productive employment of the graduates of our recreation and park curricula? I can say that the answer here is also obvious--and it is that we are entirely safe in the forecast that taken nationwide, there will be a very substantial market for the Recreation and Park Associate, the graduates of your two-year curricula for the forseeable future.

However, if I were to leave you with this simple prognosis I am sure that I would be entirely misleading, so let me temper this with some of the qualifying elements which we cannot overlook.

First of all, the junior colleges are producing, at this point, a relatively new product in the Recreation field. Professionally trained recreation and park administrators who have been conditioned in recent years to the employment of personnel with college degrees and who have been using them at levels of responsibility in many cases well below the full professional level, in jobs which could very well be handled by well trained Associates, are nevertheless reluctant to take the risk of staffing below the college graduate qualification. This is not an insurmountable problem, but its existence must be recognized. It is not insurmountable because the demand for the college graduate has materially increased, to service positions at higher levels of responsibility and at substantially increased salaries. He is becoming unavailable for positions at the entry level salaries. In addition, the husbanding of our available professionally trained personnel resources in this field makes it essential that our National Park and Recreation Association carefully plan and promote the best use of personnel.

Secondly, to assure good acceptance of a new product, it is vital that it not be oversold. We must recognize that there is an essential service which the junior college graduate can perform, and a maximum level for which his training in two years post high school education can possibly prepare him. If we conceive of this kind of training as adequate preparation for higher supervisory levels of service and attempt to promote the junior college graduate for that type of responsibility, the chance is that he will fail and the entire movement can fall into ill repute. This is a serious and immediate hazard because it is already being experienced in several situations. I will caution you that this is something that the recreation profession will neither condone or permit. The junior colleges stand to be the primary victims of this error.

Third, if the junior college graduate is to succeed, his preparation for the work he is to perform must be of the highest quality. This includes both curriculum and instructor. The former must be pertinent, thorough, and flexible; the latter must above all be qualified by both training and experience in the specific field for which he is providing the preparation. The curriculum guide prepared for the Office of Education by the National Recreation and Park Association should be of invaluable assistance to you in the development of a sound curriculum. Through our personnel placement service we are prepared to provide you with immediate referrals of qualified instructors in the Park and Recreation field. The incidental availability on your campus or in your vicinity of instructors gleaned from other fields, no matter how well intentioned, will not be productive of quality graduates for service in the recreation field and the staffing of junior college curricula with unqualified faculty is a disservice to both the student and the field for which he is allegedly being prepared.

I previously stated that, taken nation-wide, it could be safely assumed that there will be a substantial market for the junior college graduate in the foreseeable future. The assumption here is that the junior college has geared its curriculum and limited its enrollment to the personnel needs of employers in the general area it serves, or that if not, that it has students who are willing to accept employment in other parts of the country.

The personnel placement service of the National Recreation and Park Association has recently been reorganized and modernized, and through the utilization of a Termatrex system is able to provide immediate referrals for all levels of positions in the Park and Recreation field. Within the past months we have begun placement referrals of junior college graduates who have registered with us for this service. However, we have already found ourselves handicapped by the geographic limitations which some of these Associates have placed on themselves.

Therefore, it is very relevant that some coordination be exercised in areas where several institutions are training individuals for a field in which there may be very limited employment opportunities in the specific geographic area in which they desire to be employed. While opportunities may be abundant throughout the country, there could easily be substantial over-supply in a given area.

One final caution, if I may. We all recognize, I am sure, that our concern should be the preparation for a career--not just a job. This means that a significant responsibility exists to provide a career ladder for the junior college graduate coming into the Parks and Recreation field. This is basically a responsibility which must be assumed by the profession--to assure that the positions made available are not dead ends, but that through inservice training, continuing education, and other methods, the opportunity is provided for upward growth in the field. No one can deny that the junior colleges can be the most fertile resource for recruitment of promising young people into a personnel market in drastically short supply. We cannot permit so vital an opportunity to dry itself out by failure to provide the open avenues for constructive career growth.

I can promise you that the National Recreation and Park Association will do more than its share in stimulating and developing upward mobility for these young people. What we ask of you is that you plan your curricula wisely, that you coordinate your efforts with the other institutions like your own which are providing training in this field; that you select not settle for your faculty, so that it represents high qualifications for the specific field in which it is training, and that you give us the chance to work with you toward these ends.

We have a potential of great promise in its very infancy. Let's nourish it with all of the proper ingredients, that it may grow big, and strong; a credit to all of us who are involved with it, and of great and important service to the people of America.